

Message Text

SECRET

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ACTION EA-13

INFO OCT-01 ADP-00 SS-14 NSC-10 NSCE-00 PM-03 L-02 PRS-01

CIAE-00 INR-09 NSAE-00 RSC-01 DODE-00 OMB-01 IO-03

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R 231028 Z MAR 73

FM AMEMBASSY KUALA LUMPUR

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3869

INFO AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

AMEMBASSY CANBERRA

AMEMBASSY JAKARTA

AMEMBASSY MANILA

AMEMBASSY SINGAPORE

AMEMBASSY WELLINGTON

CINCPAC

S E C R E T KUALA LUMPUR 1206

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

LIMDIS

E. O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, PBOR, MY, PH

SUBJECT: PHILIPPINE MUSLIM PROBLEM

1. SUMMARY: FORMER AMBASSADOR TO U. S. ONG, PROBABLY WITH RAZAK' S KNOWLEDGE, MADE A PLEA FOR U. S. INTERVENTION TO INFLUENCE MARCOS TO ABANDON THE GOP CLAIM TO SABAH. IN SUBSEQUENT DISCUSSION, ONG GAVE IMPRESSION RAZAK WOULD BE PREPARED TO ENTER INTO SERIOUS DISCUSSIONS WITH MARCOS TO FIND A FORMULA REGARDING CLAIM THAT WOULD BE POLITICALLY ACCEPTABLE TO MARCOS. END SUMMARY.

2. FORMER MALAYSIAN AMBASSADOR TO U. S., ONG YOKE LIN, NOW SPEAKER OF THE SENATE, ASKED TO SEE ME LAST EVENING ON WHAT TURNED OUT TO BE THE PROBLEM OF PHILIPPINE MUSLIMS. ONG EVADED A DIRECT REPLY TO MY PROBING WHO HE WAS REPRESENTING.
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SENTING, BUT IT WAS FAIRLY OBVIOUS HIS CALL WAS AT LEAST WITH THE KNOWLEDGE OF THE PRIME MINISTER.

3. ONG PRESENTED THE, BY NOW, WELL- KNOWN GOM POSITION ON PROBLEM WITH GOP, BUT WITH SPECIAL EMPHASIS ON DEEP CONCERN OF RAZAK ABOUT THIS PROBLEM AND ITS IMPACT ON HIS RELATIONS WITH MARCOS AND UNITY OF ASEAN. HIS THIRTY MINUTE PITCH (WHICH I TOLD HIM I HAD ALREADY HEARD FROM SECGEN MFA ZAITON AND REPORTED TO THE DEPARTMENT) ENDED UP WITH A FAIRLY DIRECT REQUEST THAT USG USE ITS INFLUENCE ON MARCOS TO HAVE HIM AGREE TO ABANDON SABAH CLAIM. TOLD ONG WE ADHERED TO OUR " HANDS OFF" POSITION ON THIS ISSUE AND WHILE WE SHARED RAZAK' S CONCERN ABOUT PROBLEM IN AND WITH THE PHILIPPINES, WE REMAINED CONVINCED THAT SO FAR AS THE SABAH CLAIM WAS CONCERNED, IT WAS BEST RESOLVED BETWEEN THE TWO COUNTRIES THEMSELVES, OR THAT IF ANY ENCOURAGEMENT WAS NEEDED, THAT IT MIGHT BEST BE EXERTED WITHIN THE ASEAN FAMILY. I STRESSED DIFFICULTIES MARCOS WOULD FACE IN YIELDING ON THE SABAH CLAIM, WITH A GUN AT HIS HEAD, AND EXPRESSED AS A PURELY PERSONAL VIEW THAT THE ONLY PROSPECT FOR A RECONCILIATION BETWEEN GOP AND GOM ON THIS ISSUE WOULD BE A FORMULA IN WHICH NEITHER SIDE APPEARED TO LOSE OR GAIN, WHICH MIGHT BE ACHIEVED BY A MUTUAL GENUFLECTION TO ASEAN UNITY AND LASTING PEACE BETWEEN THE TWO COUNTRIES.

4. I SUGGESTED THAT SUCH AN UNDERSTANDING COULD PERHAPS EMERGE FROM A SERIOUS DIALOGUE BETWEEN THE TWO LEADERS BEGINNING WITH THE PREMISE THAT BOTH WERE SEEKING A SOLUTION ACCEPTABLE TO THEIR RESPECTIVE POLITICAL REQUIREMENTS.

5. WE DISCUSSED IN GENERAL TERMS WHAT THE INGREDIENTS MIGHT BE. ONG CLAIMED THAT RAZAK HAD ABSOLUTELY NO INTEREST IN THE SECESSION OF PHILIPPINE MUSLIMS, THAT HE WANTED VERY MUCH TO HELP MARCOS WITH THAT PROBLEM, AND THAT HE WAS PREPARED TO OFFER WHATEVER ASSISTANCE MIGHT BE USEFUL. IT BECAME CLEAR THAT RAZAK WOULD PARTICULARLY WELCOME ABANDONMENT OF THE CLAIM IN ORDER TO CLAMP DOWN ON MUSTAPHA SO THAT HE MIGHT REGULARIZE CONTACTS BETWEEN SABAH AND THE PHILIPPINES.

6. I AM NOT COMPLETELY CONVINCED THAT ONG WAS AUTHORIZED BY RAZAK TO MAKE THIS PITCH, BUT I THINK IT HIGHLY LIKELY THAT RAZAK GAVE HIM GREEN LIGHT TO DISCUSS THE SITUATION
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WITH ME, PERHAPS MAINLY TO UNDERScore HIS SINCERITY IN SEEK-

ING A SOLUTION.

7. AS I UNDERSTAND THE BIDDING AS OF NOW, RAZAK IS STILL
WAITING FOR MARCOS' REPLY TO HIS REQUEST DELIVERED TO
ROMULO ON FEBRUARY 15, THAT MARCOS DO SOMETHING ABOUT THE
SABAH CLAIM. WOULD BE INTERESTED IN EMBASSY MANILA'S
CURRENT ASSESSMENT OF THE PROSPECTS OF A DIALOGUE BETWEEN
THE GOP AND GOM ON CLAIM ALONG THE LINES DESCRIBED HEREIN.
LYDMAN

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